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IHC-MM-42  
28 January 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, IHC

SUBJECT: Background Analysis of Paragraph 4 of DIRNSA  
N1533 of 5 December 1968

1. The first sentence recommends that the DCI identify one file for each of the participating organizations having a computer system (CIA, NPIC, DIA, NSA) to establish and maintain in COINS.

25X1 Rejoinder. The DCI would turn such a request over to the Chairman, IHC [ ] for the IHC or its Support Staff, or a panel of the Committee, to select from available files those best suited to test the utility of the system during an experimental period. The latter is what already has happened, and the COINS Management in ignoring the efforts of the CODIB Panel on Files for COINS [ ] also ignores the fact 25X1 any further action would merely repeat the process without really improving it. 25X1 [ ] was offered 21 files by COINS participants, selected ten that would be available by 15 April 1968 (the date the experiment originally was supposed to begin) after matching them against eight common-sense criteria. These were chosen for their usefulness to the widest number of users so a proper evaluation of the experiment as to utility and value could be made - the technical feasibility could be tested without live files. If the COINS management objects to the Panel's reduction of files to ten, we should note that there are now about 27 files, primary and secondary, (a difficult count to make because of addition and deletions to the system) now available to COINS users. The only interpretation of this sentence 25X1 other than a request for a repetition of the [ ] process, would place the DCI in a position where he would somehow force the participants to release to COINS involuntarily some files which the agencies consider either proprietary or still developmental and not ready yet for COINS. It is doubtful that files of great value to the community as a whole were deliberately withheld from COINS, and even if it were true, it is even more doubtful that the Director of Central Intelligence would seize on this opportunity to force a USIB member to reveal to the community

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what the member felt was his business only. As to the establishment of new automated files of wide interest, the COINS management realizes that it is too late to start such files with the experiment beginning in just two and a half months. In any event, the participants are reluctant in this period of budgetary reductions to make a heavy investment of resources in expensive files for just an experiment, and would resist building files for even a follow-on system until the results of the COINS evaluation are known.

2. The second sentence says that these files should be of high intelligence value while also satisfying the information requirement of all participants.

Rejoinder. This sets an impossibly high standard for any file. The "aginnners" claim that any file of high value to its agency is of no value to any other. If this criteria were reworded "of high intelligence value to more than one agency", or "some intelligence value to all the participants", they would still be quite difficult to fulfill; but appropriate for the community.

3. "This is critical now"....

25X1 Rejoinder. They (files) have been since the beginning - as recognized in the COINS Semi-annual Report of September 1967, and the [ ] Report of March 1968. But for reasons stated in (1) above, there is not much that can be done towards changing the files for the period of the experiment.

4. "....critical now because the participating organizations were not considered in the design of the current COINS files..."

25X1 Rejoinder. All COINS participants were represented on the [ ] It is true that no outside agency is usually considered in the design of any agency's internal files - which are the only kind in existence. Intelligence community-wide files have not been established, even in such obvious fields as the National Name-Check System. This is not to deny that perhaps they should be - but their utility, financing, management, connection with the COINS experiment, etc., are still wide open questions for discussion.

5. "This action could be considered as a first step towards the establishment of "central" or "national computer data bases on well-defined intelligence subjects."

Rejoinder. The establishment of "central" or "national" data bases is an interesting question, but one only vaguely

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connected with a brief COINS experiment. The question whether their establishment is beneficial to the community must first be decided, and if such a step is found to be useful, then the question of where such central files should be maintained and of what they should consist can be next discussed. The whole problem deserves a discussion of its own unalloyed with the emotionalism attached by some to COINS. There is not any doubt that if such data bases had been in existence, the job of COINS management would be much easier. It may even be true that if such data bases existed, the COINS experiment would not be necessary. The purpose of COINS experiment is not to encourage the formation of a centralized system by begging the question, but to test the utility of a communications link-up of disparate computers and files.

Summation. What the COINS Management said in this paragraph they apparently did not intend taken literally, because it is obvious to them that there is not the time or resources available for the construction of new files of broad interest with unified format, procedures, etc., nor the need to re-select existing files from the participating agencies. Their intent, whether conscious or not, is probably to persuade the DCI, even before the commencement of the test period of the experiment, to begin a community-wide information system with central data bases located throughout the community at various agencies and under the present COINS management. But in the interest of long-range planning, COINS management should specify what type of files they desire, the subject matter, format, and other elements they feel are necessary for a successful file for a follow-on system. Their experience in standardizing the elements of the present COINS files, and knowledge gained of requestor's needs through the experiment, should be invaluable in identifying the parameters of future files. Until more specific guidance is received from COINS management, as well as the IHC, however, it would be extremely difficult for the DCI to levy any requirement for new, community-wide files on the participants.

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Executive Secretary, IHC